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Capacitive non-contact gauging system.

A capacitive non-contact gauging system comprises a plurality of head assemblies (16) each having a plurality of probes (60), a plurality of known capacitors (64) connected one to each probe (60) and a plurality of amplifier output circuits (66) connected one to each probe (60). An oscillator (52) feeds an oscillatory signal to each probe (60) and capacitor (64) combination to develop at the probe (60) a signal dependent upon the relative magnitudes of the probe-to-workpiece capacitance and the known capacitance (64). A first order multiplexer (18) associated with each head assembly (16) samples the output signals of the amplifier output circuits (66) associated with the respective probes (60) in that head assembly (16), and a second order multiplexer (20) samples the first order multiplexers (18). A plurality of PROM's (22) each associated with a respective one of the head assemblies (16) and storing information pertaining to the transfer characteristics of the amplifier output circuits (66) associated with that one of the head assemblies (16) are also arranged to be sampled by a multiplexer (24) coterminously with the sampling of the output signals of the amplifier output circuits (66). A processing unit (12) receives the sampled output signals and the correspondingly sampled transfer characteristic information and derives therefrom an evaluation of the respective probe-to-workpiece distance. The processing unit (12) further includes arrangements for (i) autocalibration of the processing unit, and (ii) for autocalibration of the oscillator output signal.

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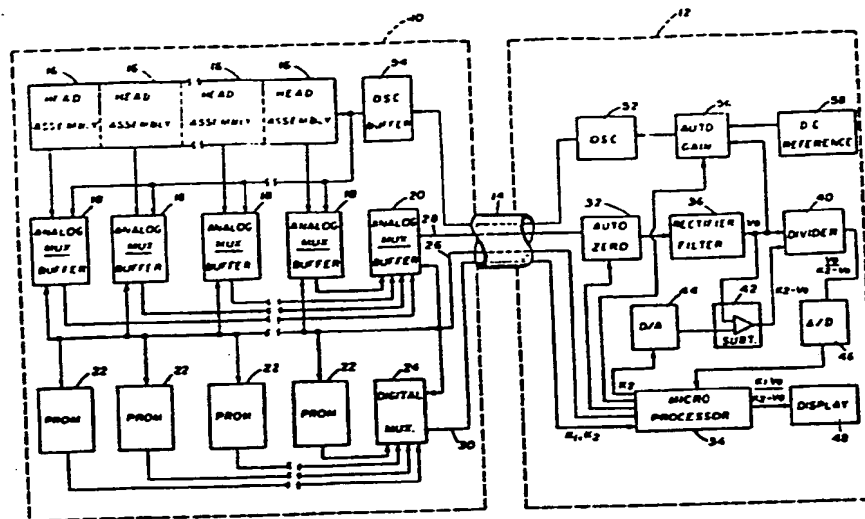


FIG. 1

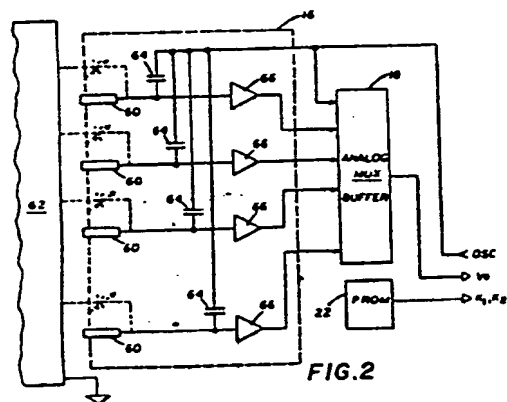


FIG. 2

- 1 -

"Capacitive Non-Contact Gauging
System"

The invention relates to a capacitive non-contact gauging system which is particularly, though not exclusively, useful for measuring the surface characteristics of a workpiece.

- 5 Capacitive non-contact gauging systems utilize a non-contacting probe which forms with a workpiece, in effect, a variable capacitor whose capacitance varies with the spacing between the workpiece and the probe. Various schemes have been used to measure this capacitance and
- 10 produce an electric signal which is indicative of the probe to workpiece distance. Examples of one method of doing this are shown in U.S. Patent Nos. 3,716,782 and 3,775,679 and use the variable capacitance to modify the frequency of an oscillator, which change in frequency is used to
- 15 produce the output distance indicative signal. According to a second approach, a capacitor of known capacitance and the probe to workpiece capacitance act as a voltage divider and the ratio of voltage across both capacitances varies as the variable capacitance varies, the output from
- 20 the voltage divider being processed and normally transformed

into an indication of the distance between the probe and the workpiece.

According to its broadest aspect, the present invention provides a capacitive non-contact gauging system comprising
5 a plurality of probes adapted each to be positioned proximate a workpiece so as to constitute with the workpiece a capacitance the magnitude whereof is a function of the probe to workpiece distance, a plurality of output circuits each individually associated with a respective one of said
10 probes for deriving therefrom in response to the application of an electrical signal thereto a signal representative of the respective probe to workpiece capacitance according to known characteristics of the respective output circuit, means for storing information pertaining to the said known
15 characteristics of each of said output circuits, and processing means for deriving for each of said plurality of probes from the said signal derived by the respective output circuit associated therewith a probe to workpiece distance evaluation taking account in each case of the stored
20 information pertaining to the said known characteristics of respective output circuit.

Whilst the invention, in its broadest aspects, is applicable to both frequency modulation systems and amplitude sensitive systems, in the following the invention
25 will be explained and illustrated with reference to an amplitude sensitive system, that is to say a system of the type wherein the capacitance established between a workpiece and a probe spaced from the workpiece, which capacitance is a function of the probe to workpiece spacing,
30 is compared with a known capacitance coupled to the probe by applying an oscillatory electrical signal between the known capacitance and the workpiece and sensing the amplitude of the signal developed at the probe, which amplitude is dependent upon the relationship of the probe
35 to workpiece capacitance to the known capacitance and

represents a measure of the probe to workpiece distance. According to one such system the invention provides a system comprising a plurality of probes each having a corresponding known capacitance coupled thereto, an
5 oscillator feeding an oscillatory signal to each of said plurality of probes, a plurality of output circuits each coupled to a respective one of said probes to receive therefrom the signal developed thereat, which signal has an amplitude representative of the probe to workpiece distance
10 at the respective probe, means for storing information pertaining to known transfer characteristics of each of said output circuits, and processing means coupled to said output circuits and to said storage means for deriving for each of said plurality of probes from the said signal
15 developed thereat a probe to workpiece distance evaluation taking account in each case of the stored transfer characteristic information in respect of the respective output circuit.

In another aspect of the invention, and as a preferred
20 feature of the aspect abovementioned, the invention provides a capacitive non-contact gauging apparatus including a plurality of head assemblies each head assembly containing a plurality of probe assemblies; a plurality of multiplexer means one connected with each of said head assemblies for
25 sampling each of the probes in the head assembly to which it is connected; central multiplexer means connected to each of said multiplexer means for sampling the outputs of each of said multiplexer means; and a central processing unit connected to the output of said central multiplexer means
30 for producing output signals which are a function of the spacing between each of the probes in each of said head assemblies and a workpiece.

Features and advantages of the invention will become apparent from consideration of the following explanation
35 of an exemplary embodiment of the invention which is

schematically illustrated in the accompanying drawings wherein:-

Figure 1 is a block diagram of a gauging system in accordance with the present invention;

5 Figure 2 is a detailed block diagram of one of the head assemblies of Figure 1; and

Figure 3 is a schematic diagram of a probe amplifier.

The gauging system shown in Figure 1 has two segments, the remote or measuring unit 10, and the control or central unit 12. Measuring unit 10 which holds the probe elements along with related circuitry is normally positioned to come into close proximity to the workpiece to be tested. The central unit 12 contains the common signal processing equipment and, optionally, the output display unit 48. The measuring unit and the control unit are connected by a section of cable 14.

The measuring unit consists of a plurality of head assemblies 16. The exact structure of the head assemblies will be shown and described in more detail in connection with Figure 2. Any number of head assemblies may be used, however for digital processing equipment 16 head assemblies has been found to be a convenient number. Each of the head assemblies contains a multiplicity of probes, a capacitive voltage divider for each probe, and an amplifier which buffers each voltage divider and decreases the output impedance. The output of each head assembly is connected to an analog multiplexer and buffer circuit 18. Each of the analog multiplexer and buffers 18 have an output connected to analog multiplexer and buffer 20. The analog multiplexers 18 sequentially sample each of the multiplicity of probes within the head assembly to which they are connected. The analog multiplexer 20 sequentially samples each of the multiplexers 18. In this manner, a sequential sampling of all the probes is accomplished. The output of analog multiplexer 20 is a

series of signals each indicative of the capacitance between one of the probes and the workpiece, which signals are in a known sequential order.

The system is very sensitive to capacitance and slight variations in the tolerances of the components which make up the circuits. This sensitivity is especially noticeable in the amplifiers for each of the probes. With precision manufacturing and calibration the individual amplifiers could be made to have the same circuit characteristics. However, such precision is monetarily and time wise a consuming operation. The present invention overcomes the need for this with a series of programmable read only memories (PROM's) 22. Each of the amplifiers is tested and two circuit constants, K_1 and K_2 , indicative of the variations of tolerances of the parts within the amplifier and probe assembly, are determined as is explained hereinafter. For each amplifier in each of the head assemblies, the two corresponding constants are programmed into the corresponding PROM 22.

Each of the PROM's 22 has an output connected to a digital multiplexer 24. As the multiplexers 20 and 24 are both addressed by the same signals on control line 26 from front control panel, the outputs of the multiplexers will then be a series of signals representing the output voltage from each of the head assembly amplifiers on line 28 and the corresponding circuit constants for that amplifier on line 30.

Looking now to control unit 12, it can be seen that the analog voltage indicative of the relative capacitance or distance between the probes and the workpiece comes into control unit 12 through cable 14 on line 28. The signal first goes to the auto zero control circuit 32. This circuit does not operate on the analog voltage, but rather is an automatic calibration circuit which, between samplings, is able to cut off the input on line 28 and

ground the line going into the signal processing circuitry. When the microprocessor 34 sends a command to the auto zero circuit to ground the input of the signal processing equipment, it correspondingly adjusts the output signal to zero. In this manner it automatically calibrates the circuitry in the control circuit system 12.

Also in the control unit 12 is oscillator 52. The oscillator produces a high frequency oscillating voltage with a very rigidly controlled amplitude. By way of example, a frequency of 200 kilohertz and a 12 volts peak to peak voltage have been found to be satisfactory. The oscillator output signal is applied through oscillator buffer 54 to the input of each of the probe amplifiers in each of the head assemblies 16.

The oscillator signal is connected to each of the analog multiplexers/buffers 18. This enables the oscillator voltage to be sampled periodically by each of the analog multiplexers for automatic recalibration. For example, by sampling the oscillator voltage once with each scanning of the fifteen probes within one of the heads, the oscillator can be automatically recalibrated. To calibrate the oscillator 52, there is an auto gain circuit 56. When one of the analog multiplexers 18 samples the oscillator voltage, a control line from the microprocessor 34 also causes the auto gain circuit 56 to compare the output voltage of rectifier filter 36 with a d.c. reference voltage 58. If the voltages do not match, auto gain circuit 56 adjusts the rigidly controlled oscillator voltage accordingly.

When a measurement is being taken, the analog voltage signals on line 28 are passed through circuit 32 to the rectifier and filter circuit 36. The signal coming in to the rectifier filter circuit 36 will be in the form of an oscillating voltage signal whose amplitude is indicative of the probe to workpiece spacing. Circuit 36 first

rectifies this oscillating signal with a full wave rectifier and then filters the rectified signal to produce a steady state or DC analog voltage which is proportional in amplitude to the probe to workpiece spacing. This analog signal, V_o , goes to a divider circuit 40 and to a subtraction circuit 42.

For each voltage V_o corresponding to one of the probes, the microprocessor reads on line 30 the constants K_1 and K_2 corresponding to the same probe and feeds the constant K_2 to a digital to analog converter 44. The output digital to analog converter 44 forms a second input to subtraction circuit 42. The output signal of subtraction circuit 42, $K_2 - V_o$, and the output from rectifier filter circuit 36, V_o , are both fed to divider circuit 40. Circuit 40 divides the output of the rectifier filter circuit by the output of the subtraction circuit. The output of the divider is then fed to an analog to digital converter 46, which transforms the ratio produced by divider 40 into a digital signal and feeds it to the microprocessor 34. Microprocessor 34 multiplies this signal by the constant K_1 to get a final signal which may be expressed as

$$\frac{K_1 V_o}{K_2 - V_o}$$

As will be explained in the following, this equation represents the distance between the probe and the workpiece. This value is normally put into temporary storage in the micro-processor. From the temporary storage it is read out to a display device such as that shown in U.S. patent application Serial No. 855,128 or 855,522, to other suitable display devices, or to a memory device to be recorded for later recall.

Instead of calculating actual probe to workpiece distances, the microprocessor can compare each distance value with a series of preselected values. For example, a standardized workpiece, which is exactly to tolerances,

could be placed adjacent the probe assembly and the distance values calculated and stored in microprocessor 34 or the microprocessor could be programmed with the ideal values. The microprocessor may be programmed to subtract the distance values obtained for each subsequent workpiece from the values determined for the standard and to display the deviation from the standard. The display may be a straight line when the workpiece is perfect with deflections above the line indicating a bulge and deflections below the line indicating an indentation. Alternately, based on meeting some quality control criteria such as one measurement being out of tolerance or a segment or plurality of the distances deviating from the standard by more than an acceptable average or some other criteria, an accept or reject signal can be produced, which signal will cause automated workpiece handling equipment to place the workpiece in either an acceptable or unacceptable pile.

Figure 2 shows a close up of one of the head assemblies 16 and related structure. In each head assembly there are a plurality of probe elements 60. There may be any convenient number, however for use in digital equipment it has been found that fifteen probes per head assembly is very convenient, because this enables a sixteen bit analog multiplexer 18 to sample the fifteen probe outputs and the oscillator voltage for calibration purposes. The probe assembly and workpiece 62 are brought into close proximity. The probe and the workpiece will, in effect, be the plates of a variable capacitor. As a probe 60 and workpiece 62 come closer together with capacitance increases, and as they move further apart the capacitance decreases, producing in effect a variable capacitance. Each of the probe workpiece capacitances along with one of the capacitors 64 form a capacitive voltage divider for the oscillating voltage from the oscillator 52. Between each of these two capacitive elements is connected the input to one of amplifiers 66. It can be seen that the input to each

amplifier will be a higher voltage when the effective capacitance between 60 and 62 decreases and a lower amplitude voltage when the effective capacitance between 60 and 62 increases. The output voltage from each
5 amplifier 66 will then be a function of the capacitance between its associated probe 60 and workpiece 62 which is to say, a function of the distance between one of the probes 60 and workpiece 62.

It should further be appreciated that best results are
10 obtained if capacitor 64 is temperature stable. Because capacitor 64 is used as a reference capacitance, the voltage divider is in effect, finding the ratio of the two capacitances. Thus, the capacitance of capacitor 64 should be readily determinable and should not change during the
15 operation from such causes as temperature fluctuations. A quartz capacitor has been found suitable for this purpose. The capacitance of capacitor 64 is normally comparable with the mean probe workpiece capacitance which is a function of probe size, mean probe workpiece spacing, etc., a 0.35 pf
20 capacitance has been found to be effective.

A stable amplifier suitable for use as amplifier 66 is shown in Figure 3. From the midpoint of the capacitive divider formed by capacitor 64 and the probe workpiece capacitance the amplifier input is connected to the gate
25 of FET 70. In series with FET 70 is a constant current source which in the preferred embodiment is composed of a pair of FET's 72 and 74. Also in series with the constant current source and FET 70 is a line 76 connected to a positive biasing voltage, e.g., +15 volts, and a line 78
30 connected to a negative biasing voltage, e.g., -15 volts, along with biasing resistors 80 and 82. This first stage of amplification then has a very low input capacitance and very high impedance. With bootstrapping, careful circuit construction and guarding, the input capacitance may be
35 kept on the order of .01 pf. The output of the first stage at resistor 84 presents a voltage which is a function

of the probe to workpiece spacing.

The second stage of amplification is performed by a pair of transistors 86 and 88. These two transistors provide a two stage amplification of the signal at resistor 84 and provide an output on line 90 which again is a function of the spacing between the probe and workpiece.

By way of example, transistors which have been found compatible in the above system include 2N4416 for FET's 70 and 72, 2N4338 for FET 74, 2N3904 for transistor 86 and 2N3906 for transistor 88.

The diameter of the probe is determined by looking to the spacing between sampling points desired and by looking to the anticipated mean distance between the probes and the workpiece. The probe should be large enough in diameter compared with the distance between the probe and workpiece that capacitive edge effects are minimized, i.e., the smaller the probe diameter, the closer the workpiece should be to the probe. Thus, to improve resolution in the measurement of the probe to workpiece distance, a larger diameter probe is desirable. However, the larger the probe diameter the greater the spacing between sampling positions. It can be seen that a trade-off must be reached in the area of probe diameter. Probe diameters of 0.1 inch, .25 inch and .50 inch have been found to be successful. An 0.1 inch diameter probe, for example, has been found successful in measuring a workpiece to probe spacing which varies from 5 to 25 mils to an accuracy of within 10 microinches (.010 mils).

Looking now to the theory and mathematics behind the system, as pointed out above capacitors 64 and the capacitance between each probe 60 and workpiece 62 (see Figure 2) work as a voltage divider. Thus, the voltage input into an amplifier 66 will be to the voltage of the oscillator as the capacitance of the stable reference capacitor. 64 is to the total capacitance of capacitor 64 plus the probe

workpiece capacitance. In mathematical equation terms, then:

$$(1) \quad V_o = A \frac{V_{osc} C_{in}}{C_{in} + C_g + C_p}$$

5 where V_o is the voltage out of amplifier 66, A is the amplification factor of the amplifier 66, V_{osc} is the voltage amplitude of the oscillator output C_{in} is the capacitance of capacitor 64, C_g is the internal capacitance of the amplifier 66 and C_p is the capacitance between probe
10 60 and workpiece 62.

If one assumes that the probe 60 and workpiece 62 are effectively a parallel plate capacitor, the capacitance between 60 and 62 can also be expressed as:

$$(2) \quad C_p = \frac{K}{D}$$

15 where K is a constant which includes both the relative dielectric constant of the medium between the probe and the workpiece and the effective area of probe 60, and D is the distance from the probe to the workpiece. Combining equation 1 and 2 above, the distance from the probe to the
20 workpiece can be expressed as:

$$(3) \quad D = \frac{V_o K}{A V_{osc} C_{in} - V_o (C_{in} + C_g)}$$

It will be noticed in equation 3 above that except for V_o all the terms are discrete physical properties of the
25 system. These properties may be calculated or measured. Because of the accuracy needed, it has been found much faster and more accurate to measure the characteristics of each amplifier rather than calculate each of these terms individually. Thus, for each amplifier, the distance
30 can be reduced to:

$$(4) \quad D = \frac{K_1 V_o}{K_2 - V_o}$$

where K_1 and K_2 are each physically measurable characteristics of the amplifier. In particular, K_1 equals
35 $\frac{K}{C_{in} + C_g}$ and K_2 equals $A \frac{V_{osc} C_{in}}{C_{in} + C_g}$. The constants K_1 and K_2

can be measured in a number of ways such as by a least squares method or by measuring the output voltages V_o for different known distances of D and solving mathematically for the values of K_2 and K_1 . The values for K_1 and K_2 are the constants discussed earlier in connection with the overall system shown in Figure 1, which constants are stored in PROM 22 connected with each individual amplifier 66.

The system aforescribed presents many improvements over other amplitude sensitive systems and frequency modulation systems. One of the advantages is in the elimination of parallel parts. Many of the prior systems required an oscillator and signal processing circuitry for each probe. The system described, by contrast, has a single oscillator and a single signal processing circuit for a large multiplicity of probes. An additional advantage of the system is its temperature stability. The changes in capacitance between the probes and the workpieces are generally very small which makes capacitive measuring systems very susceptible to error from temperature changes and stray capacitance. Small changes in temperature have been found to cause large variations in many systems. In the present system, the very low input capacitance and high impedance unity gain amplifier improves temperature stability. The amplifier disclosed has been found to be accurate to 0.1% over a temperature range of 35 to 150°F.

The disclosed system, because of its temperature stability and other superior design characteristics, is able to measure very small changes in distance. Distances of a few millionths of an inch can be detected. This great precision is required when measuring many surface characteristics such as straightness or conformance to a contour. The present gauging machine finds ready use for determining the flatness of machine molded, stamped, cast or fabricated parts, the straightness of cylinder walls

or holes, and the conformance to specified contours of such complex parts as step shafts, air foils, and turbine blades.

A further advantage of the present invention is its rapid measuring ability. Although the speed will vary with
5 the number of probes used, it has been found that with 240 probes the present invention can usually produce an indication of the conformance of a workpiece at 240 positions within 5 seconds. This rapidity increases the precision of measurement instruments because the surface
10 contour of the workpiece can be sampled at such a large number of points. Further, this rapidity enables testing equipment to sample large numbers of workpieces in a relatively short amount of operating time.

The present system has a further advantage in that
15 the large number of probes can be arranged in a linear array or in a grid array or along a winding contour or in almost any other array. A linear array, however, produces the most easily understood two dimensional display of surface contour. Because a linear array can measure 200 or more
20 points along a single line of contact of the workpiece, the system can produce a very detailed two dimensional, cross section-like view of the surface along the line of closest proximity between the workpiece and the line of
25 view other line segments along its surface.

CLAIMS:

1. A capacitive non-contact gauging system comprising a plurality of probes adapted each to be positioned proximate a workpiece so as to constitute with the workpiece a capacitance the magnitude whereof is a function of the probe-to-workpiece distance, a plurality of output circuits each individually associated with a respective one of said probes for deriving therefrom in response to the application of an electrical signal thereto a signal representative of the respective probe-to-workpiece capacitance according to known characteristics of the respective output circuit, means for storing information pertaining to the said known characteristics of each of said output circuits, and processing means for deriving for each of said plurality of probes from the said signal derived by the respective output circuit associated therewith a probe-to-workpiece distance evaluation taking account in each case of the stored information pertaining to the said known characteristics of respective output circuit.
2. A capacitive non-contact gauging system of the type wherein the capacitance established between a workpiece and a probe spaced from the workpiece, which capacitance is a function of the probe to workpiece spacing, is compared with a known capacitance coupled to the probe by applying an oscillatory electrical signal between the known capacitance and the workpiece and sensing the amplitude of the signal developed at the probe, which amplitude is dependent upon the relationship of the probe-to-workpiece capacitance to the known capacitance and represents a measure of the probe-to-workpiece distance, said system comprising a plurality of probes each having a corresponding known capacitance coupled thereto, an

oscillator feeding an oscillatory signal to each of said plurality of probes, a plurality of output circuits each coupled to a respective one of said probes to receive therefrom the signal developed thereat, which signal has an amplitude representative of the probe-to-workpiece distance at the respective probe, means for storing information pertaining to known transfer characteristics of each of said output circuits, and processing means coupled to said output circuits and to said storage means for deriving for each of said plurality of probes from the said signal developed thereat a probe-to-workpiece distance evaluation taking account in each case of the stored transfer characteristic information in respect of the respective output circuit.

3. A capacitive non-contact gauging system as claimed in claim 1 or 2 including multiplexing means for sampling the outputs of said output circuits and applying the signals developed thereat to said processing means, said multiplexing means being arranged furthermore to sample the said applied electrical signal for the purpose of calibrating the same, a reference signal source being provided, and means being provided for adjusting said applied electrical signal according to the relationship of the sampled value thereof to the value of said reference signal.

4. A capacitive non-contact gauging system as claimed in claim 3 wherein said plurality of probes are arranged in a plurality of head assemblies each comprising a plurality of probes, a plurality of first order multiplexing means are provided each associated with a respective one of said head assemblies for sampling the outputs derived from the respective probes therein, a second order multiplexing means is provided for sampling the outputs of said plurality of first order multiplexing means, said information storage means comprises a plurality

of memory stores each individually associated with a respective one of said plurality of head assemblies, and information storage multiplexing means are provided for extracting from the respective storage location the stored information pertaining to the characteristics of an output circuit concurrently with the sampling of the respective output circuit by the first and second order multiplexing means.

5. A capacitive non-contact gauging system as claimed in claim 3 or 4 including calibration means operable to force the output of said multiplexing means to a pre-selected voltage for use in calibrating said processing means.

6. A capacitive non-contact gauging system as claimed in any of the preceding claims wherein each of said output circuits comprises a low internal capacitance, high impedance amplifier coupled to the respective probe, said amplifier comprising a FET having its gate connected to the respective probe and having its source-drain path connected in series with a constant current source comprising a pair of series-connected FET's.

7. A capacitive non-contact gauging system as claimed in claim 6 wherein each said amplifier further comprises a second amplifier stage having an input coupled between the first-mentioned FET and the constant current source and an output bootstrapped to the gate of said first-mentioned FET.

8. A capacitive non-contact gauging system as claimed in any of claims 3 to 7 when dependent upon claim 2 wherein, for each of said plurality of output circuits, said information storage means is arranged to store a

pair of constants K_1 and K_2 defined by the relationships

$$K_1 = \frac{K}{C_{in} + C_g} \quad \text{and} \quad K_2 = \frac{A \cdot V_{osc} \cdot C_{in}}{C_{in} + C_g}$$

where

- K = a function of the dielectric constant of the medium between the probe and the workpiece and of the effective surface area of the probe;
- C_{in} = the magnitude of the said known capacitance;
- C_g = the magnitude of the internal capacitance of the respective output circuit;
- A = the amplification factor of the respective output circuit; and
- V_{osc} = the amplitude of said oscillatory electrical signal;

and wherein said processing means is adapted to compute the value of the quantity $\frac{K_1 V_o}{K_2 - V_o}$ for evaluating the probe-

to-workpiece distance for each of said probes, K_1 and K_2 comprising the aforesaid pair of constants and V_o comprising the amplitude of the signal appearing at the output of the respective output circuit.

9. A capacitive non-contact gauging system as claimed in any of the preceding claims including means for storing information pertaining to a predetermined probe-to-workpiece distance for each of said plurality of probes, and means associated therewith and with said processing means for deriving a deviation signal in respect of each of said probes corresponding to the difference between the respective probe-to-workpiece distance as evaluated by the processing means and the respective predetermined probe-to-workpiece distance.

10. A capacitive non-contact gauging apparatus including a plurality of head assemblies each head assembly containing a plurality of probe assemblies;

a plurality of multiplexer means one connected with each of said head assemblies for sampling each of the probes in the head assembly to which it is connected;

central multiplexer means connected to each of said multiplexer means for sampling the outputs of each of said multiplexer means; and

a central processing unit connected to the output of said central multiplexer means for producing output signals which are a function of the spacing between each of the probes in each of said head assemblies and a workpiece.

11. A capacitive non-contact gauging apparatus as claimed in claim 10 further including a plurality of memory means each associated with a respective one of said head assemblies for storing information indicative of properties of the head assembly with which it is associated; and memory multiplexing means connected to each of said memory means for sampling the output of said memory means in concert with said multiplexing means such that the memory multiplexing means samples the memory means associated with one of said head assemblies at the same time that the central multiplexing means samples the multiplexing means associated with the same head assembly; the output of said memory multiplexing means being connected to said processing unit whereby the processing unit may take account of said stored information in the production of said output signals.

12. A capacitive non-contact gauging apparatus for measuring the distance between a plurality of probe elements and a work piece at a plurality of locations comprising:

a plurality of probe elements positioned to have one end adjacent to the workpiece;

an electrical energy source;

capacitive means for connecting said electrical energy source to a second end of each of said probe elements;

output means connecting said second end of each of said probe elements to inputs of a multiplexing means; and

processor means connected to outputs of said multiplexing means for serially deriving an output signal representative of the distance between each of said probe elements and the surface of said workpiece.

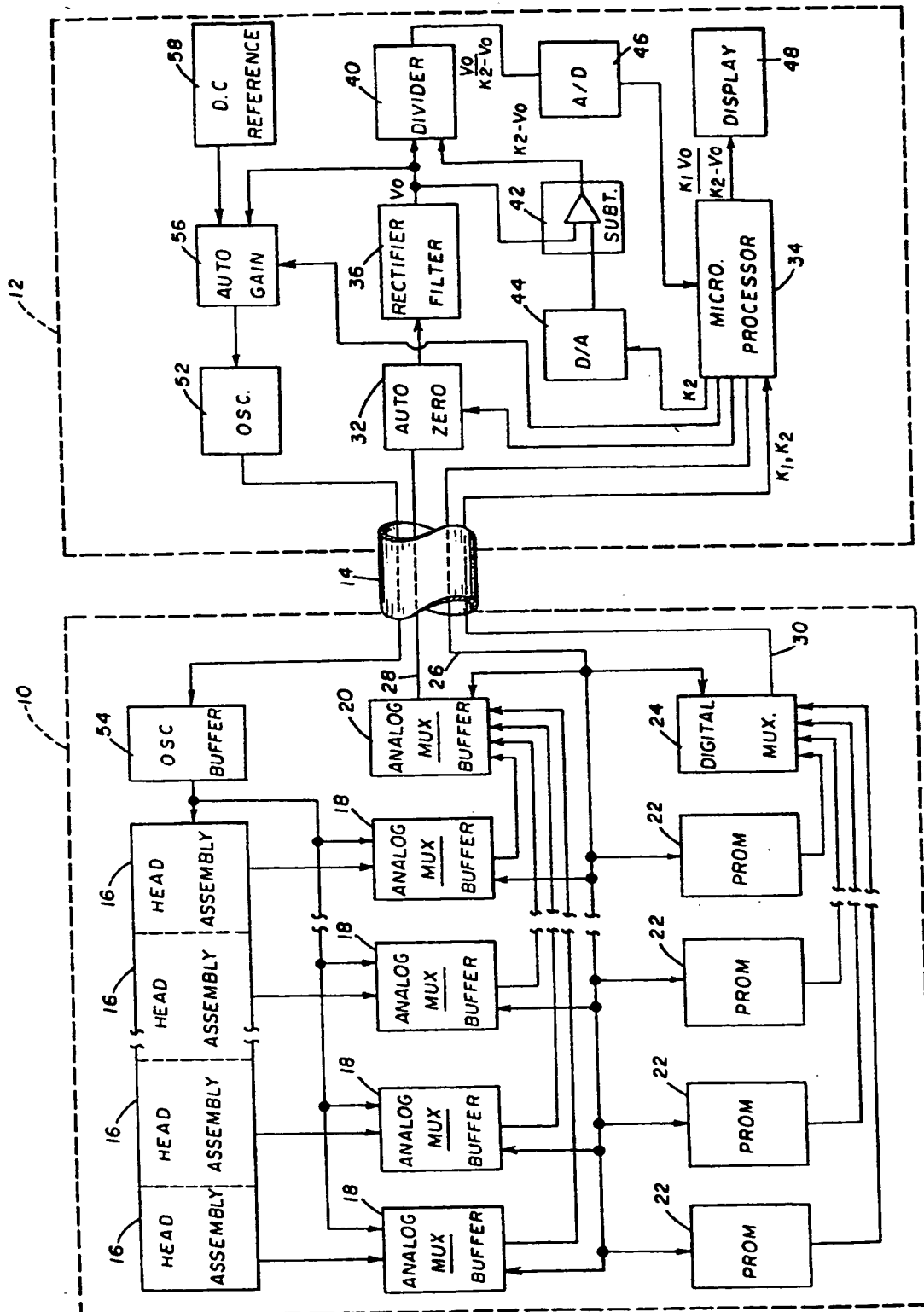
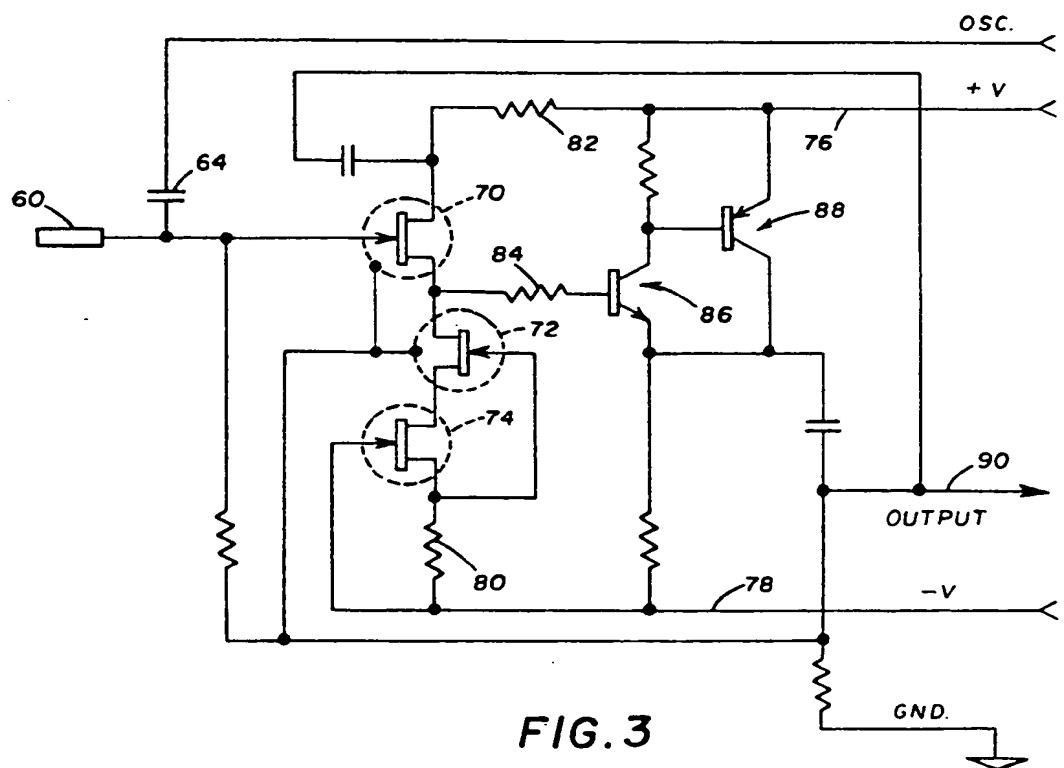
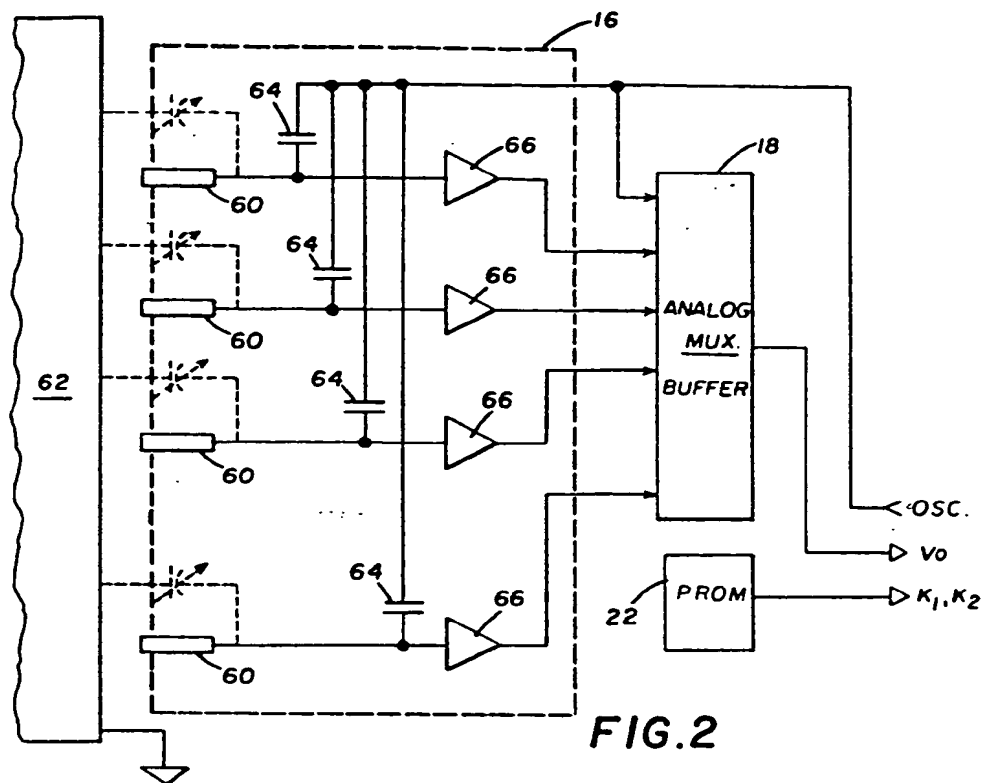


FIG. 1





European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

0004757

Application number

EP 79 300 529.9

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl.)
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	
A	<u>DE - B - 1 914 045</u> (MESSER GRIESHEIM GMBH) * claims 1, 5, 8, 10, 12 *	1,2,4, 10-12	G 01 B 7/14 G 01 B 7/34 G 01 R 27/26
	DE - A - 2 158 320 (F. MAYER) * claims 1, 2, 5 *	2	
	DE - A - 2 550 427 (KAMAN SCIENCES CORP.) * claims 1, 2 *	1,2	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl.) G 01 B 7/00 G 01 R 27/26
			CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X: particularly relevant A: technological background O: non-written disclosure P: intermediate document T: theory or principle underlying the invention E: conflicting application D: document cited in the application L: citation for other reasons
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			&: member of the same patent family, corresponding document
Place of search Berlin		Date of completion of the search 22-06-1979	Examiner KÖHN

EPO Form 1503.1 06.78